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Main Policy Lines in Education and Training (November 2013 – December 2013)

I. European Union

1. Institutional context

1.1 Presidencies of the EU

The three consecutive presidencies for the EU (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece) work together as the Trojka for the duration of 18 months. They have agreed on a common policy programme.

Ireland has been president from 1 January until 30 June 2013; Lithuania from 1 July until 31 December 2013; Greece from 1 January until 30 June 2014. There will be EU elections under the Greek Presidency.

The programme of the Greek presidency has not been published yet. The following themes will be high on the agenda:

- Economic growth and employment
- Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union
- Action to fight illegal immigration
- Maritime affairs

At the occasion of the Council of Ministers for Education (25-26 November 2013), the Greek delegation presented the priorities in the field of education:

- Innovative education and social cohesion
- Fight ESL
- Foreign languages
- Promotion of VET
- Preschool education
- Recognition of formal and informal learning

1.2 Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting

Brussels, 25-26 November 2013

The Council adopted conclusions on effective leadership in education and the global dimension of European higher education. It also held a debate, in public deliberation, on OER (Open Educational Resources) and digital learning.

In the field of Youth, the Council adopted conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training.

[Press release](#) of the Council

2 Education and training

2.1 Erasmus +

On 3 December 2013, the Council adopted the regulation establishing "ERASMUS +", the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the period 2014-2020. It brings together in a single programme activities previously covered by a number of separate programmes (including the Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus Mundus and Youth in Action) and it also covers activities in the new area of European competence, sport.

The new programme has a total budget of about €14.7 billion, which represents an increase of 40% compared to the precedent budget. Its main operational priorities are simplification of procedures and a performance-based allocation of funds, as well as closer links between the formal, informal and non-formal education and learning sectors.

It also includes a number of innovative proposals, such as the student loan guarantee facility, knowledge alliances and sector skill alliances, which are partnerships between teaching institutions and firms with the aim of facilitating the transition between education and work, thus contributing to reduce youth unemployment.

Erasmus+ kept a separate chapter for youth and a separate budget allocation, together with increased access for non-organised youth activities. It also guarantees minimum levels of spending for each education sector (schools, higher education, vocational education and training and adult education), and broadens the access to the programme to persons with special needs or fewer opportunities.

[Read more](#) about the programme, the background and the procedural steps

2.2 Education and Training Monitor 2013

30 October 2013

The annual Education and Training Monitor examines the evolution of Europe's education and training systems. The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) was launched in 2012 to bring it in line with the EU Strategy for growth and jobs, and to support Member States in their reform efforts. One objective has been to strengthen the evidence-base and analytical capacity of ET 2020, on which the next country-specific recommendations can

draw. This is the aim of the Education and Training Monitor series, the first edition of which was presented in November 2012.

At the request of the Council, the Education and Training Monitor is an annual report presented every autumn by the Commission, setting out progress on the [ET 2020 benchmarks](#) and core indicators, including the Europe 2020 headline targets on education and training. The Education and Training Monitor illustrates the evolution of education and training systems across Europe, with a particular focus on the country-specific recommendations adopted in the field of education and training, and contributes to the analytical basis for the next European Semester.

[Full report](#)

[Read more](#) about the Monitor, key findings, 28 individual country reports and dynamic online visualisation tools.

2.3 Effective leadership in education

Council Conclusions, 25 November 2013

The Council adopted conclusions on effective leadership in education, inviting member states to make educational leadership more attractive, supporting the autonomy of educational institutions and educational leaders in pedagogical matters and the internal allocation of resources, while ensuring that they have the necessary means as well as to adapt and respond effectively to specific and changing local conditions.

The conclusions also call for the development of innovative approaches to educational leadership, for instance through the Strategic Partnership actions of the Erasmus+ programme, including by encouraging educational leaders to cooperate with companies, civil society associations and different levels of educational institutions, both internationally and within the local community.

The Commission also suggested that it would be important to lighten the administrative burden on leaders so that they can devote more of their time to fundamental issues such as the quality of learning, curriculum content and staff performance. But this will also imply greater accountability.

Read [the conclusions](#).

2.4 The global dimension of European higher education

Council conclusions, 25 November 2013

The Council adopted conclusions on the global dimension of European higher education, which call in particular for comprehensive strategic approaches towards internationalisation, in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, covering three main areas:

- student and staff mobility;
- the internationalisation of curricula and digital learning;
- and strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity-building.

The main purpose of internationalisation is to improve the quality of higher education and to better prepare learners in Europe to live in a global world and work in a global economy. The modernisation

and internationalisation of higher education are also seen as key elements in enhancing the EU's drive for growth and jobs through innovation and research.

The Commission recalled the major role of the new Erasmus+ programme in the field of student and teacher mobility but underlined that this is a very complex process and that in this field "one size does NOT fit all". It also underlined that not only students but also university teachers will benefit from the possibilities offered by the new programme.

Read [the conclusions](#).

2.5 Open educational resources and digital learning

Education Council, 25 November 2013

Ministers were invited to outline during the debate the overall approach being adopted at national level concerning digital learning, in particular massive on-line open courses (MOOCs), and to share their views on how issues such as quality assessment and the recognition of skills and competences acquired by such means might be addressed.

The debate was launched by one of the guest speakers: Uschi Schreiber, from Ernst and Young. Ms Schreiber stressed that digital learning is not an option, it's already happening, in particular in countries like China and in Southeast Asia.

Professor Azzone, rector at the "Politecnico di Milano", described his institution - which is a pioneer in distance learning in Italy - as a "traditional university between "Moocs" and globalization". He argued that European universities should not try to replicate american massive investment in on-line courses, but rather capitalize on European specific features and added value.

He explained that developing a single on-line course is very expensive (around EUR 100.000) and very time-consuming . He believes that in any case MOOC's cannot replace "traditional" education and gave a concrete example from Milano Politecnico: the completion rate of "in class" course is 70% and "on-line" 12%.

3 Developments in other policy domains: youth

3.1 The social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS)

Youth Council, 25 November 2013

The Council adopted conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training.

More than 5.7 million young people (23.6 %) in the EU were without a job in January 2013 and 30 % of unemployed people under the age of 25 in the Union have been unemployed for more than twelve months. The economic cost of this situation - in terms of benefits paid out, lost tax revenue and earnings foregone - was estimated by the EU Agency Eurofound at 153 billion per year.

The conclusions seek to address the problem of NEETs in a more systematic way, by including a series of policy measures covering prevention, education, training and non-formal learning, voluntary activities, the transition from education to employment, and employment itself.

The Commissioner underlined that NEET's are not an homogeneous group, so measures to tackle the problem must be adapted accordingly.

Read [the conclusions](#).